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Birmingham Sheraton

Thank you to Alabama Governor Bob Riley and Commissioner Irene Collins for having the foresight to want to include Alabama in this 2005 White House Conference on Aging. What a great opportunity! All too often we (Alabamians) have not had such a great opportunity and I again thank you on behalf of all seniors in our great State, especially those in the Black Belt and Rural areas of Alabama.

In reference to Bob Blancato's comment regarding having vision for this listening session, Governor Riley and Commissioner Collins are visionaries and this reminds me of a quote, "Where there's no vision, the people will perish."

Rural Prospective

Today, my comments are in regard to the Expansion of Services.

1. Accessing to information, transportation
2. Making services more consumer friendly
3. Allowing caregivers more choices

We have experienced great challenges regarding accessibility of services do to either no provider or one that cannot meet the requirements for the provision of services. My question is "What good is a service if you do not have access to it or it cannot be provided the traditional way?"

I heard our Commissioner Collins say this morning, "If you always do what you have always done, you are sure to get the same results." We must allow flexibility regarding the provision of services. If someone in the community can provide a person with transportation and they are willing to do so, we must find ways to reimburse them. For it is the community that is going to make the difference in the provision of care of our Seniors.

We must become a little less traditional and do things that will work to help our Seniors to maintain their independence and dignity. Rethink our successes and realize that despite the progress that we have made, we still have a long way to go in providing services to Seniors.

Finally, I would like to emphasize that successful and meaningful aging is a process beginning with birth. Therefore, we must as advocates make sure that Senior needs are met by expanding opportunities, less bureaucracy, choices of services, as well as who provides those services, and more innovative approaches toward service for "the Baby Boomers".

AoA, thank you for the multitude of services that you are currently being provided. **However, change is inevitable!**